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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: TIME FOR PLAN B

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Introduction -----

11. (S/NF) As Washington reviews U.S. policy towards Somalia, particularly in light of the current crisis, we offer our thoughts on how to sustain the TFG while ensuring that core U.S. interests are protected. The TFG is in the most severe crisis of its short life, and we have no guarantees that it will survive, let alone succeed, to establish a viable national government. As a result, we cannot afford to wait to see what happens. As we continue to support the TFG, we should take steps now, i.e. a Plan B, to protect American interests.

Seeking a U.S. Objective in Somalia -----

12. (S/NF) From our vantage point, the U.S. objective in Somalia should be to facilitate the emergence of a strong national democratic federal government, recognized as legitimate by the majority of Somalis, that is capable of policing its territory to such an extent that it can reduce, and eventually, eliminate transnational threats from its territory, and live in peace with its neighbors. However, we must be realistic and understand that the TFG may not be the vehicle for change we had hoped for, and that despite our best efforts, the experiment may not work.

U.S. Ability to Save the TFG Limited -----

13. (S/NF) Unfortunately, the window of opportunity to see the TFG emerge as a national government is closing fast, if it is not already shut, as the TFG is fighting for its life, leaving us with few options, and even less ability to impact the outcome of the current crisis. Washington's support for AMISOM is the TFG's lifeline, and AMISOM is giving the TFG the opportunity to get its house in order, if they decide to take it. We cannot do it for them. At the end of the day, the Somalis themselves are responsible for what happens in their country. Should the TFG fall, the Somalis must accept responsibility. U.S. policy has weighed both positive and negative on Somalia in recent years, but Washington and the international community has given the Somalis the opportunity to change their fortune through the institutions of the TFG, and it is up to the Somalis to decide to accept or reject it. We cannot expect the Somali experiment to work when it appears that we want to see a strong national government in Somalia more than the Somalis, including some members of the

TFG itself, appear to want it.

14. (S/NF) Sending more weapons to Somalia is not the answer. We have no mechanism to track the use and further transfer of the weapons, and anecdotal reporting indicates that some TFG forces are monetizing their weapons for various ends, including to purchase khat, making the weapons available for purchase by the insurgents. Frankly, we question whether on any given day the TFG itself knows how many troops it can reliably call on given the number of defections and the shifting alliances. Analysis suggests that the TFG's true problem is a lack of a unified command and control over a force of divided and questionable loyalties, a problem more weapons cannot fix. What the TFG needs is soldiers who are willing to use the weapons they have to defend the TFG. The fact that the TFG has constantly to purchase loyalty to motivate militias to fight in its defense suggests that there is a much deeper fundamental problem within the TFG that is beyond the international community's ability to address in the short-term, if at all.

15. (S/NF) Over the medium term, Washington, with support from the international community, can take steps to disrupt support to al-Shabaab and Hisb Islam, particularly from Eritrea. It may be too optimistic to think that if we just give President Isaias one more chance for dialogue, he will amend his ways and cease being the single greatest source of instability in the Horn of Africa. Washington can also pursue other diplomatic initiatives, and press for support from international partners, but there is little that the U.S. can do to impact the course of the daily fighting on the

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ground in Mogadishu. That outcome is up to the Somalis to decide.

For the Longer-Term, TFG Legitimacy is the Key

16. (S/NF) Assuming the TFG survives the current crisis and is able to find some breathing room, the focus of U.S. efforts in Somalia should be to help the TFG establish legitimacy in the minds of the Somali people. While the TFG is fighting for its life, it is unreasonable to expect that any progress can be made on long-term goals. Legitimacy, and the resulting increase in popular support, will magnify the TFG's influence in Mogadishu, and eventually other regions, in a sustainable fashion that military force alone cannot. In order to develop legitimacy, the TFG needs to provide basic services to the population, something they have thus far failed to do, partly because their priorities have been elsewhere, and partly because of a lack of resources. This is where Washington and the international community can assist by providing programs to help the TFG build the institutions of governance, and thereby demonstrate to the Somali people that the TFG is a benefit to them. To date, the vast majority of U.S. assistance to Somalia has been to provide humanitarian relief and to support AMISOM, rather than for capacity-building (The only financial assistance we have given to the TFG was for the purchase of weapons and to buy militia loyalty). Support for humanitarian aid and AMISOM are important, but does not directly help the TFG build a government. By not assisting the TFG directly, we are again applying medicine to the symptoms, rather than the root cause.

17. (S/NF) Legitimacy is also critical because it is unrealistic to expect that the TFG is capable of defeating its enemies militarily. The TFG relies on AMISOM to maintain its presence in Mogadishu (In fact, AMISOM has become a combatant by providing daily fire support to TFG forces), and certainly, a government that cannot defend itself is in no position to defeat a determined enemy. Furthermore, there are no signs that al Shabaab and Hisb Islam, despite their uneasy and fractured alliance, have been mortally wounded or are near defeat. To the contrary, it is a far easier task

for the anti-TFG forces to bring down the TFG, than it is for the TFG to defeat them because the TFG has an identifiable and singular center of gravity, the presidency, whereas the extremist network has multiple nodes from which to operate and continue the war.

18. (S/NF) Steps that Washington can take directly, or in coordination with the international community, to help the TFG establish its legitimacy and capacity in the longer-term include the following:

--Direct conditioned programmatic support to the TFG to build capacity in the civil and security sectors (starting with a Security Sector Reform assessment).

--Explicit insistence, backed by financial assistance and conditionalities, that the TFG get on with governance and service delivery.

--A regional diplomatic approach that seeks alignment of regional activities (particularly Ethiopia and Eritrea) with that of the international community.

--Continued support to AMISOM and contingency planning to prepare for the possibility that the force may have to depart Mogadishu quickly in a worst case scenario.

--A coordinated public diplomacy campaign that helps highlight the service delivery of the TFG, and

--Provision of continued humanitarian and development assistance.

Don't Wait, Implement Plan B Now

19. (S/NF) Whatever happens with the TFG, there are steps that Washington can and should take now. Time is running out. The assassination of TFG Minister of Security Omar Hashi and TFG Ambassador Abdi Karin Farah effectively

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neutralized any TFG counteroffensive in central Somalia, and al-Shabaab is moving forward to establish competing local governments throughout the central and southern regions with ample financing and arms. No one can guarantee that the TFG will survive, let alone succeed, and therefore, the U.S. needs a Plan B that will limit the regional effects of instability in Somalia as a backstop to ensure core U.S. interests are protected. Waiting to draft and implement a contingency plan until after the TFG falls does not serve U.S. security interests. Even if the TFG survives, at best it will be years before it might be in a position to eliminate terrorism and piracy from Somalia. Plan B does not preclude Plan A, the two should be complementary, and Plan B has the potential to help create the necessary space for Plan A to work.

--A regional diplomatic approach that is focused on facilitating coordination among the "front-line" governments to work together against a common threat.

--Increased support to Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Yemen to amplify their counterterrorism capabilities.

--U.S. and UN sanctions against individuals and entities supporting extremists in Somalia, with a particular focus on Eritrean actors.

--A substantial increase in political, technical, development, and CT support to Somaliland and Puntland who need capacity to control their own territories and fight against extremism and piracy.

--Increased intelligence collection on Somalia political and security developments, and

--A comprehensive strategy to target high value targets, their finances, movements, and weapons acquisition.

Kinetic Strikes Should Be Limited

¶10. (S/NF) Kinetic strikes should be limited to high-value targets (HVTs) who are a clear threat to the United States. The elimination of HVTs who are also providing expertise and assistance to al Shabaab would have an added benefit of degrading the insurgent's capabilities. Ad hoc strikes against non-HVTs in the name of "relieving the pressure" on the TFG escalates our involvement in a civil war in the name of counterterrorism, with no clear objectives, guidelines or identifiable endstate, in a situation in which we have no control. This also assumes that the TFG is in a position to take advantage of any "space" that might result. At the same time, there is no concrete evidence that periodic U.S. strikes in Somalia are an effective deterrent, and al Shabaab has demonstrated that it has been able to recover and replace losses from occasional strikes, even if the insurgents were temporarily disorganized. Strikes in defense of the TFG also would reinforce the perception that the TFG is a puppet government of the United States, and certainly result in political backlash against President Sharif, who would be forced to condemn publicly the attack. While TFG officials may be in favor of U.S. military action in private, this is a sign of weakness and desperation on their part. A Somali government that was truly confident and secure would not request foreign intervention because of the inevitable domestic backlash from a Somali population that resents all external interference.

A Note on Support to Somaliland and Puntland

¶11. (S/NF) Should the TFG fall, there is no doubt that Somaliland and Puntland will be the next targets of al-Shabaab, and we note that if we wait until these two governments are under direct sustained attack, it will be too late to help them. The argument that U.S. support to Somaliland would undermine the TFG politically ignores the reality of the relationship between Mogadishu and Hargeysa, and should not stand in the way of support to Somaliland to prevent it from falling to al-Shabaab. Within the context of Somali politics, it is difficult to imagine any scenario whereby Somaliland would willingly surrender its independence to a government in Mogadishu, and so Washington should

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recognize that southern Somalia and Somaliland will never again be part of one unified state. We also would suggest that in terms of U.S. interests, increased support to Somaliland, short of recognition, may well be sufficient for the time being. Puntland lacks the political institutions of Somaliland, and would require more creativity in the provision of support.

AMISOM Contingency Planning Still Needed

¶12. (S/NF) AMISOM remains vulnerable to asymmetric attacks and indirect fire, although it is unlikely that the entire force would be overrun as long as it is supplied with ammunition, but there is a significant risk that all or part of the force could be cut off from the port or airfield. AMISOM's battalions are spread out in central and southern Mogadishu, making it more difficult for the battalions to support each other, and putting some contingents at greater risk. Furthermore, anti-TFG forces in the late June fighting made territorial gains in the Karan district, putting them within reach of the port. Politically, AMISOM could find itself in Mogadishu without a TFG to support, a scenario also requiring an evacuation from Somalia. Neither the AU nor AMISOM have yet to develop contingency plans for evacuation,

and we continue to anticipate that the AU will look to Washington for help in the event AMISOM has to depart Mogadishu.
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